

REMARKS

Entry of this amendment under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. 1.116 is respectively requested. Claim 1 is now previously presented claim 18 rewritten in independent form, including the recitations in intermediate claim 15. No new issues requiring any further search or consideration are raised.

This application, as amended herein, contains claims 1 - 3, 6 - 9, 11 - 14, 16, 17, 19 and 26-28. Claims 4, 5, 10 and 20 - 25 were previously canceled. Claims 15 and 18 have been canceled in this paper.

Claims 1-3, 6-9, 11-19 and 26-28 were rejected as being obvious over Arkles et al. ('531). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1, by its very terms, before the final office action, recited:

depositing a first layer on the substrate by plasma enhanced atomic layer deposition of a tantalum halide precursor in the presence of a plasma containing hydrogen and nitrogen

Claim 1 has been amended herein to explicitly recite that the deposition of the first layer includes:

- a. exposing the substrate to the tantalum halide carried by an inert gas;
- b. exposing the substrate to the plasma; and

c repeating a. and b. approximately 40 - 800  
times until a desired thickness of the first  
layer is obtained.

Thus, claim 1 now explicitly recites method steps associated with plasma enhanced atomic layer deposition.

Further, as noted in response to the previous office action, claim 1 also recites in a method for forming a bilayer of tantalum nitride and tantalum on a substrate, reducing concentration of nitrogen in the plasma to zero so that a substantially nitrogen free second layer of tantalum is formed. It is respectfully submitted that Applicants' invention, as set forth in claim 1, is not taught or suggested by the art of record.

It is respectfully submitted that the rejection is simply inadequate for the following reasons. First the final rejection in no way addresses the recitations of claims 18, and intermediate claim 15, which are now included in independent claim 1. Second, Arkles et al. is directed to CVD (chemical vapor deposition) and not to plasma enhanced atomic layer deposition, a completely different technology. This is why the rejection does not and can not address the recitations of cancelled claims 15 and 18, which are now included in claim 1. These matters are discussed in detail below.

A careful review of the details of the rejection on pages 2 and 3 of the final office action shows that there is not a single word directed to the recitations of claim

15 or claim 18. Nowhere does the rejection deal with the recitations of claim 1 of exposing a substrate to a tantalum halide carried by an inert gas and to a plasma, repetitively approximately 40 - 800 times, until a desired thickness of the first layer is obtained. Thus, the rejection simply does not deal with or reach claim 1, as amended herein, to include the recitations of claims 18, and those of intermediate dependent claim 15. As noted above, there is a reason for why the rejection is does not deal with or reach claim 1. It is related to the second point raised above, and addressed immediately below.

Arkles et al. is simply a deficient reference for the rejection of claim 1, as amended herein. The office action must be silent on exposing a substrate to a tantalum halide carried by an inert gas and to a plasma repetitively approximately 40 - 800 times until a desired thickness of the first layer is obtained, simply because there is no teaching or suggestion in Arkles et al. of such an approach. A careful reading of Arkles et al. discloses only conventional CVD (chemical vapor deposition). There is no teaching or suggestion in Arkles et al. of using plasma enhanced atomic layer deposition, and exposing a substrate to a tantalum halide carried by an inert gas and to a plasma repetitively approximately 40 - 800 times until a desired thickness of the first layer is obtained, as specifically recited in claim 1. CVD and atomic layer deposition are two completely different technologies, and Arkles et al. is directed entirely to CVD. There is not a word in Arkles et al. concerning using plasma enhanced atomic layer deposition, as specifically recited in claim

1. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claim 1 must now be withdrawn.

As noted in Applicants' prior paper, the method of claim 1 is especially useful in forming a diffusion barrier for copper, as noted in dependent claim 6. Advantageously, the bilayer is formed by establishing the conditions for deposition of a tantalum nitride layer, and then removing nitrogen from the plasma to obtain a nitrogen free tantalum layer.

In view of the above, it is submitted that claim 6, is also directed to patentable subject matter.

Claim 28 recites that the second layer of tantalum comprises amorphous tantalum. As previously noted, applicants' specification, at page 16, lines 15 - 28, notes, in pertinent part, that:

This is partly because the Ta PE-ALD layer has an amorphous structure which contributes to the copper diffusion barrier properties by reducing the number of grain boundaries (Grain boundaries are the predominant copper diffusion mechanism). Further, the inherently better copper diffusion barrier property of the TaN, as opposed to that of a Ta single layer, positively contributes to the resulting diffusion barrier properties. In summary, both the amorphous PE-ALD tantalum layer and PE-ALD tantalum nitride layer positively

contribute to the resulting diffusion barrier properties.

The rejection of claim 28 is also deficient for the same general reasons as set forth for claim 1 above. First, the rejection fails to deal with recitations of claim 28. Second, Arkles et al. is simply deficient for formulating a rejection of claim 28. While Arkles et al. does teach an amorphous tantalum nitride layer, it does not teach or suggest an amorphous nitrogen free tantalum layer. In view of the above, it is submitted that claim 28 is also directed to patentable subject matter.

The remaining claims depend from claim 1. These claims include further recitation which in combination with those in claim 1, are not disclosed or suggested in the art of record. For the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1, it is submitted that these claims are also directed to patentable subject matter.

In view of the allowable nature of the subject matter of all of the claims, if the Examiner cannot issue an immediate allowance, it is respectfully requested that the undersigned be contacted to resolve any remaining issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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